

**REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 21, 2012**

The Wethersfield Town Council held a meeting on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console.

Absent: Chairperson Hemmann.

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Michael Turner, Director of Physical Services and Dolores G. Sassano, Town Clerk.

Councilor McAlister led the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

Deputy Mayor Console moved **“TO ADD TO THE AGENDA AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AT THE END OF TONIGHT’S REGULAR MEETING REGARDING A LEGAL ISSUE,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Mayor Console moved **“TO ADD TO THE AGENDA REGARDING DEBRIS REMOVAL,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

HEARING

Ordinance repealing and replacing Chapter 37 of the Code of the Town of Wethersfield Sale of Town Property.

Phillip Rouquie, 410 Church Street, spoke in favor of the change in the Ordinance.

Jim Woodward, 5 River Road, spoke in favor of the change in the Ordinance.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented that he didn’t feel it was a good idea if the Town were to start reducing the opportunities of cashing in on some properties.

No one else spoke – Hearing Closed.

PRESENTATION OF THE NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR CHALLENGE – presented by Erin O’Neill. She explained that this was a program that consists of several State and non-profit organizations that came together under a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy trying to get households to reduce energy use by 20% over the course of the grant period and the goal is to reach 1000 households in Wethersfield. The program also promotes home efficiency.

Councilor Drake asked what specifically was it that they wanted the Town Council to do to help promote the program.

Jessica Bergman, lead organizer of the Neighbor to Neighbor Challenge, responded that what she sees that works is to lead by example and create a testimonial.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

John Miller, 45 Highland Street, commented on a traffic study being done on Route 3 by the Town of Rocky Hill, specifically the Cromwell Avenue, Route 3 corridor/Cromwell Avenue and New Britain Avenue intersection. He noted this is a regional concern and Wethersfield should be involved, but he doesn't believe Wethersfield is involved. He noted that he is concerned because it seems that there doesn't appear to be any consideration outside the study area. He commented that Wethersfield should be concerned with Route 3 North of the Cromwell Avenue/New Britain intersection because traffic is and continues to be busy.

Jim Woodward, 5 River Road, spoke on behalf of the Great Meadow Trust and thanked Mayor Hemmann for participating in the winter walk series. He asked if Town Commission agendas can be consistently posted on the Town websites. He also commented on a new pilot program called "The Community Farms Preservation Program." This program consists of a pre-qualification phase, which he felt Wethersfield would qualify because of the work of the Conservation Commission.

Phillip Rouquie, 410 Church Street, commented that he and his wife were interested in the Wilkus Farm property, but with the minimum bid of \$310,000, they decided not to look further into the situation. He commented that people should have followed the rules with regards to the bidding as the only bid received was well below the minimum bid. He suggested that the Town have an assessment done of the property as the present assessment could be off.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on the last Board of Education meeting and the joint meeting of the Board of Education and Town Council. There was discussion on full day kindergarten at the cost of \$830,000. At the last Board meeting the cost was reduced to the \$650,000 range.

Kim Robinson, 57 Stillman Road, commented on the proposal of all day kindergarten in Wethersfield. She commented on recent data provided by the Board of Education on January 10, 2012, on the Emerson Williams School Improvement Plan: 89% of the kindergarteners were reading at their appropriate independent reading level, 41 out of 46 students were reading at or above where they should be at the end of the school year. The first graders were at 89%, second graders at 80% and third graders were at 68%. On a half day program, the kindergartners were outperforming the first, second and third graders in reading. The data reflects that the third graders need the intervention, followed by the second graders. This shows that more resources are not our greatest need. She referenced a study done by UCONN in 2000, when residents were asked to name the biggest issues facing Wethersfield schools they listed overcrowding as the

biggest concern, with 31% responding. Only 1% of those surveyed, named all day kindergarten as a concern. Now, 10 years later, there is overcrowding in the classrooms, 16 classrooms in the middle school have over 30 students in each class, and the Board of Education is adding fuel to the fire by adding approximately 6 new teachers to the Kindergarten program. Instead of adding an entire program to satisfy the wants of a few, she suggested reducing class sizes and hiring additional teachers at the appropriate grade levels which is not nearly the cost of an entire new program. In 2001 and 2002, the School Board charged a research committee to study the ramifications of implementing a full or extended day program. Surveys were sent to approximately 500 parents, though many favored an extended day program, only 23% of the parents favored a full day program. Even with the feedback, the Committee went on to issue its recommendation for full day kindergarten. She also supplied a petition signed by people who supported half day kindergarten, which she also supplied to the Board of Education. Some of the signers were angered by the cost, while others signed the petition because they believed that full day kindergarten was not a good fit for every child. She urged the Council not to provide money to fund full day kindergarten.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Councilor Kotkin reported for the Insurance Committee and noted that the claims history continues to be the same. They are looking at the possibility of spending \$30,000 to \$40,000 for an audit on health insurance claims.

Councilor Manousos reported for the Budget & Finance Committee. Auditors have reviewed the reports and there were no weaknesses or deficiencies found. There were some recommendations for internal controls that staff is reviewing as necessary. The 2011 Annual Report was also reviewed. Upcoming union negotiations, library supervisors, non supervisors, police unions, the Town Attorney RFP, budget goals for the high school renovation, maintaining services and programs within a reasonable budget, funding mechanism for road maintenance and capital improvements. On the pavement program, additional funding of \$400,000 was discussed.

Councilor Roberts reported for the Senior Citizens Advisory Committee, which did not meet due to lack of a quorum.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Deputy Mayor Console thanked Dolores Sassano for the Town Clerk's Report. He noted that there will be an Infrastructure Committee meeting on February 22 at 6:00 p.m. and a Public Safety Committee meeting on February 23 at 6:00 p.m. He asked if the Town Manager could look into the Route 3 issue that was brought up at the meeting by John Miller.

Town Manager Bridges said the Town is monitoring it and staff is attending meetings.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Jeff Bridges noted he had nothing to report.

COUNCIL ACTION

Councilor McAlister moved **"TO ACCEPT THE RESIGNATION OF THOMAS PENTALOW, 66 BOULTER ROAD, FROM THE PARKS & RECREATION BOARD,"** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor McAlister moved **"TO APPOINT DAVID HEROLD, 54 OLD MILL ROAD, TO THE INLAND WETLANDS AND WATER COURSES COMMISSION FOR THE TERM 02-21-2012 THROUGH 06-30-2014; JORDAN DIKEGOROS, 16 BAY ROC, TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD AS AN ALTERNATE FOR THE TERM 02-21-2012 THROUGH 06-30-2012"** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Montinieri moved **"TO APPOINT DOUG OVIAN, 56 BROAD STREET, TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION AS AN ALTERNATE FOR THE TERM 02-21-2012 THROUGH 06-30-2012; WAYNE URBANSKI, 46 MARMOR COURT, TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE TERM 02-21-20112 THROUGH 06-30-2012; THERESA URBANSKI, 46 MARMOR COURT, TO THE WETHERSFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FOR THE TERM 02-21-2012 THROUGH 06-30-2012"** seconded by Councilor Roberts.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Councilor Hurley moved **"TO APPROVE ORDINANCE REPEALING CHAPTER 37, SALE OF TOWN PROPERTY, BE IT ORDAINED THAT PART II GENERAL LEGISLATION OF THE CODE OF THE TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD IS HEREBY AMENDED BY REPEALING CHAPTER 37 AND REPLACING IT WITH THE FOLLOWING: CHAPTER 37, SALE OF TOWN PROPERTY,"** seconded by Councilor Drake.

Jeff Bridges reported that the Infrastructure Committee recommends approval of the ordinance which would open up possibilities for Town properties.

Councilor Drake commented that there were several reasons for making this change and to open up options to more people.

Councilor McAlister asked what exactly the problem is and felt there could be the potential for

misuse by future councils.

Councilor Drake noted that he believes that will not be able to be done without this ordinance.

Councilor McAlister asked how property has been leased to the Historical Society.

Councilor Drake responded that he is not sure how the lease works.

Councilor Montinieri commented that the issue with the current language of the ordinance is if the Town is to determine a property is available for sale, the current ordinance requires that it goes to the highest bidder. What the revision is attempting to do is to take a look at the property that poses some potential liability issue for the Town, if the Town decides to go in the direction of a sale, under the current Ordinance the Town can only look at the highest bidder and not look at potential use.

Councilor McAlister commented that he understands the issue with the Wilkus Property but has an issue changing the Ordinance for a single property.

All Councilors present voted AYE. Councilor McAlister Voted NO. Councilor Manousos ABSTAINED. The motion passed 6-1-1.

Councilor Hurley moved **“TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN MANAGER TO WAIVE THE BID PROCESS TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO CONNECTICUT BARK MULCH FOR HAULING AND DISPOSAL OF THE WOOD CHIP DEBRIS AT \$4.00 PER CUBIC YARD AND TO AWARD A CONTRACT TO ENVIROCYCLE TO COMPLETE CHIPPING OF STORM DEBRIS AT A RATE OF \$4,200 PER DAY,”** seconded Councilor Kotkin.

Mike Turner reported that he is requesting additional funds for debris removal related to the clean up from the October storm. He explained that the pile of mulch is presently smoldering and there have been numerous fire calls. He further explained that these costs are considered Category A removal costs which are eligible for FEMA reimbursement up to 75% of the cost.

Councilor Montinieri wanted to know the plan for the pile before it had started smoldering.

Michael Turner responded that this point, there was no plan.

Councilor Montinieri if any mulch has been retained in the past and was it moved.

Michael Turner responded that mulch has been retained in the past to be used at the dog park and Wintergreen Woods and has been moved by Town employees as needed.

Councilor Montinieri asked if any portion of the mulch can be retained in order to reduce the cost and to be used in house.

Michael Turner responded that during the year, Tree Warden, Phil Smithwick will have collected enough tree debris to be used around Town, so this particular mulch pile is being considered as excess.

Councilor Kotkin asked where the mulch is taken.

Michael Turner responded that it is taken to a licensed disposal area in Enfield, which is a DEEP requirement. The licensed disposal may then process it for wood pellets.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he has concerns with the heavy trucks going up and down Jordan Lane, the roads have suffered some damage and he asked how the Town is going to handle further damage. He also asked how high the piles of mulch were.

Michael Turner responded that the mulch pile is between 30 and 40 feet.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that there are farm regulations as to the height of mulch piles, which he believes is 12 to 16 feet maximum. He asked if the Town could follow these rules.

Michael Turner responded that the Town is exempt from these rules during an emergency declaration and secondly, the Town does not have the land area. He further explained that the Town's leaf piles are kept within the guidelines of 12 to 16 feet high.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if there is a way to cover the pile and leave it without spending this kind of money.

Michael Turner explained that if there was snow cover, that may have worked, but at this point in time, there is no snow in the future.

Councilor McAlister asked if there was an alternative property in Town in which to spread the mulch pile, what would the cost be for that.

Michael Turner responded that it would cost \$4 to \$5/to move it. Town trucks can only hold 6 cubic yards.

All Councilors present voted AYE. Deputy Mayor Console voted NO. The motion passed 7-1-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

BIDS

Councilor Manousos moved **“TO APPOINT HALLORAN & SAGE AS TOWN ATTORNEY UNTIL DECEMBER 15, 2013,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS, APPOINTMENTS FOR INTRODUCTION

Introduction of Chapter 40, Voting Districts: Introduction of the ordinance to set the new voting districts.

Resolution for Records Management Grant: Introduction of Resolution to accept a records management grant from the State of Connecticut.

MINUTES

Councilor Kotkin moved **“TO APPROVE THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 6, 2012”** seconded by Councilor Montinieri. .

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. Councilor Manousos ABSTAINED. The motion passed 7-0-1.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, commented on Michael Turner’s request for additional money for storm clean up.

At 8:35 p.m., Councilor McAlister moved **“TO GO INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS LEGAL MATTERS,”** seconded by Councilor Montinieri.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

At 9:09 p.m., Councilor Hurley moved **“TO LEAVE EXECUTIVE SESSION,”** seconded by Councilor Manousos.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:09 p.m., Councilor Roberts moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved by Vote of Council
March 5, 2012